

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1185

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

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AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TECH, FR, BR

SUBJECT: FRENCH-BRAZILIAN NUCLEAR COOPERATION

REF: A) PARIS 17726 B) BRASILIA 5657

1. BOTH THE BRAZILIAN AND FRENCH PRESS SEEM TO BE EXAGGERATING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FRENCH SALE OF A MINERVE-TYPE REACTOR TO THE BRAZILIANS FOR \$2.5 MILLION (REF A & B). THE MINERVE IS A LOW-POWER (100 WATTS) RESEARCH REACTOR EMPLOYED IN NEUTRON PHYSICS STUDIES ON SAMPLES OF THE MATERIAL USED IN POWER REACTOR CORES. THE CORE OF THE REACTOR SITS IN AN ALUMINUM-LINED POOL WITH A VOLUME OF 160 CUBIC METERS. IT IS FUELED WITH 90 PERCENT ENRICHED URANIUM. A GROUP FROM CEA'S REACTOR DESIGN DEPT OPERATES THE FACILITY, WHICH WE JUDGE TO BE ABOUT 2 DECADES OLD.

2. THE USE OF THE MINERVE FOR FAST BREEDER RESEARCH IS LIMITED TO STUDIES OF FAST NEUTRON ABSORPTION AND FISSION CROSS SECTIONS. AN ENRICHED URANIUM
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LATTICE IN THE CORE CAVITY ACTS AS A FAST NEUTRON

EMITTER. CROSS SECTION MEASUREMENTS CAN BE MADE ON
SAMPLES OF FISSILE, FERTILE, AND STRUCTURAL MATERIAL
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMPOSITION OF FAST NEUTRON
CORES, BUT ONLY AT LOW NEUTRON FLUX DENSITIES.
RUSH

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